

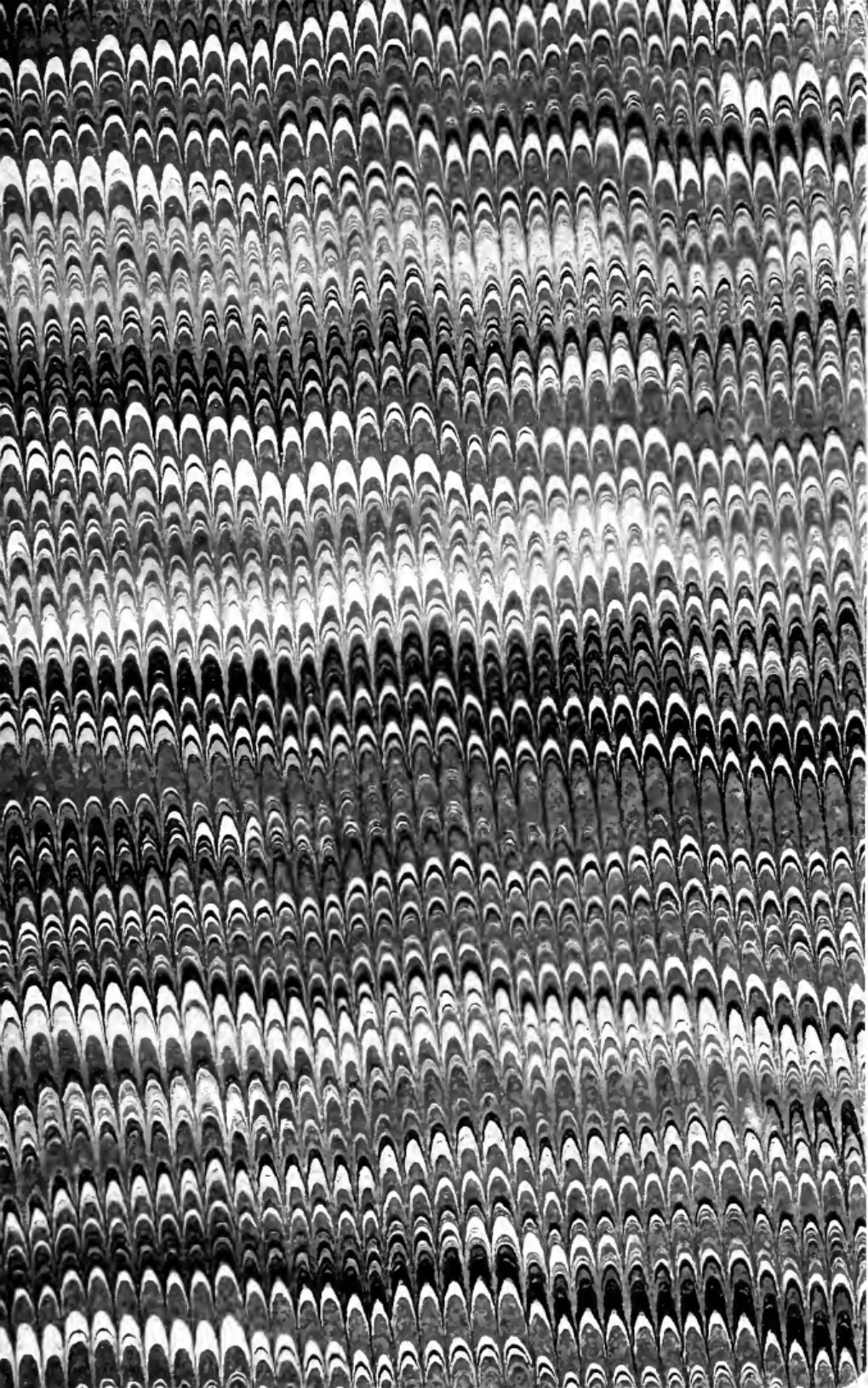
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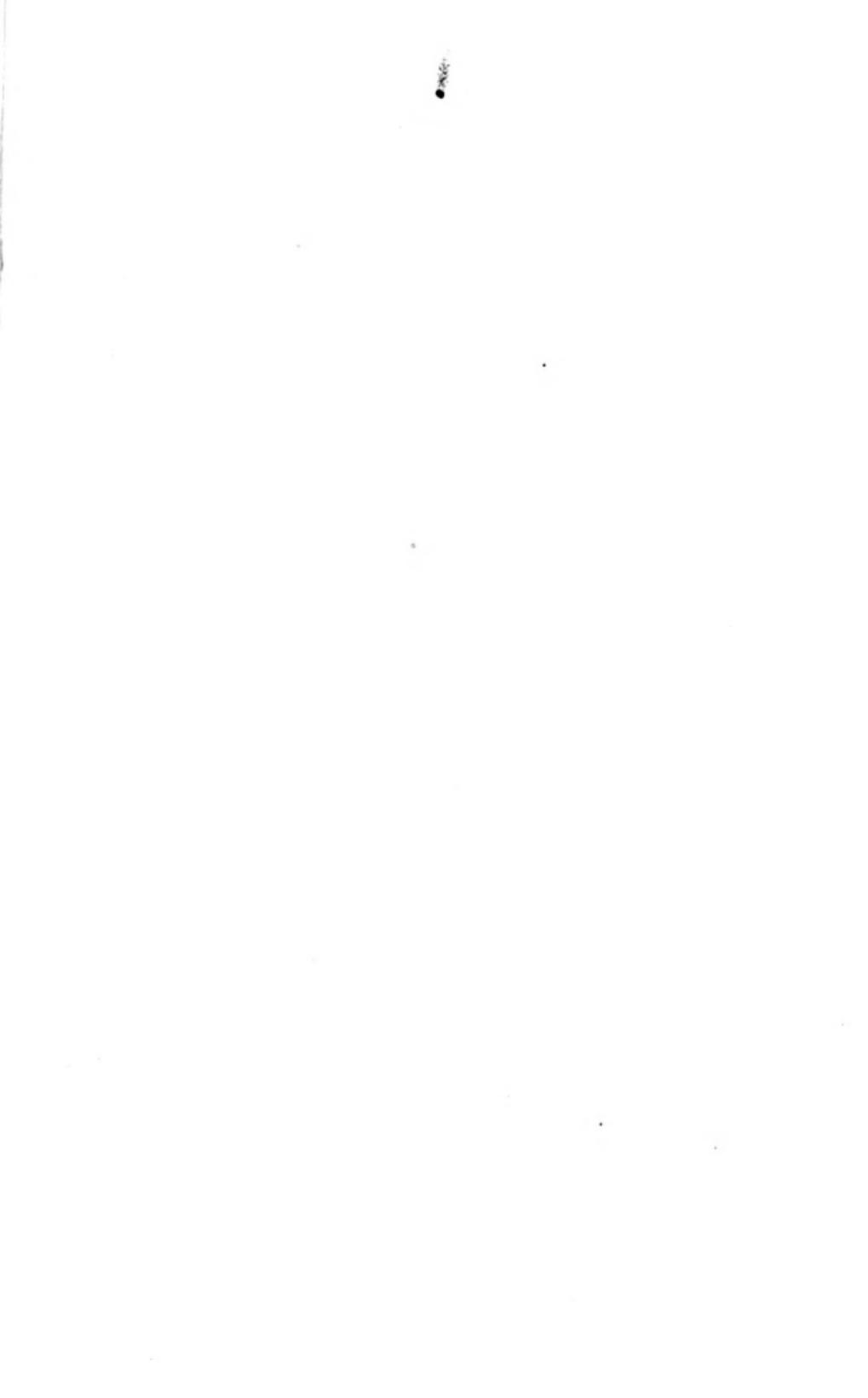
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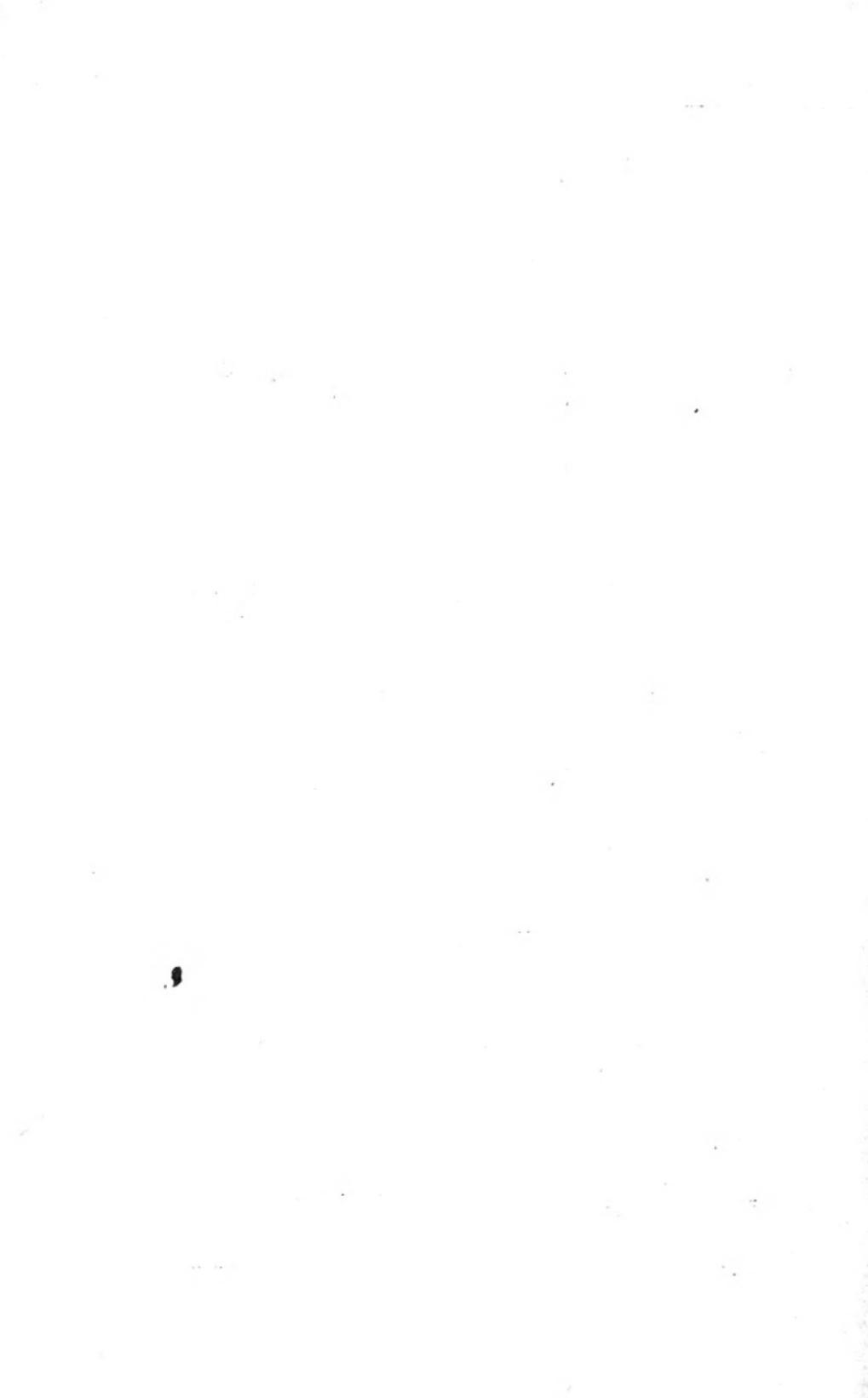
THE STORY
OF THE
NINETY-FIRST.

READ AT A RE-UNION OF THE NINETY-FIRST REGIMENT
OHIO VOLUNTEER INFANTRY, HELD AT PORTSMOUTH,
OHIO, APRIL 8, 1868, IN RESPONSE TO THE
TOAST, "OUR BOND OF UNION."

BY E. E. EWING.



PORTSMOUTH, OHIO:
PRINTED BY THE REPUBLICAN PRINTING COMPANY.
1868.



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One, 1868

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A thousand glorious actions, that might claim
Triumphant laurels, and immortal fame,
Confused in crowds of glorious actions lie,
And troops of heroes undistinguished die.

ADDISON.

The Story of the Ninety-First.

Should any ask at whose behest
Our willing feet have hither pressed ;
Why we have met together here ;
What mystic tie that we revere ;
Already in our hearts is told
The same one reason, never old ;
Our fellowship through those dark years
Of grief and wrong, and blood and tears,
And friendship strong and ever true
We here have hasten'd to renew.

When treason hovered o'er the land,
And held almost supreme command,
And loyal ranks were driven baek,
Leaving their blood in every track ;
When plighted faith was oft betrayed,
That should the gory tide have stayed ;
When traitors lined yon river's shore
And threaten'd e'en your very door,
When haughty monarchs smiled their
scorn
At Freedom's boasted ensign torn
And rift in shreds—its motto—"One
In many"—"see," they boast—"undone."

'Twas then we heard above the roar,
That call, "*Six hundred thousand more!*"
'Twas Lincoln spoke, the nation's head,
On lightning through the land it sped;
Its pulse had scarcely ceased to beat
That did the mandate stern repeat,
The cadence scarce had time to fall,—
Six hundred thousand heard the call!—
And hearing, "here am I," each said,
And on his country's altar laid
His strength, his hope, his life, his all,
What e'er the off'ring might befall.
What loves attendant in each breast,
What idol each had cherished best
Was gone, and there was left to burn
The fire of patriot zeal alone.

Who now shall be the first to reach
The faltering ranks, and fill the breach?
We little knew of warlike art;
We only knew that mind and heart
And strength and will impelled us on
To deeds of valor yet undone.
No boastful spirit dared find rest,
Or glory vain within our breasts;
For well we knew our foeman's steel,
If ours were worthy, it were well!

I need not lead your mem'ry back,
Or mention here your first attack;
Hard-taek it was, you can't forget,

That first our iv'ry bay'nets met
And fell beneath them. Then by "flank"
We captured each a soft pine plank.
Our next was made on beans and pork;
A good digestion did the work,
Induced, 'tis true, by daily drill—
Such *drill* a bore we argued still.

But passing now those early scenes
Of soldier life, our march begins;
Here "blood will tell," and here's the
test,
And soon we'll see who bears it best.
For once when twenty miles or so
We'd marched, we came to Buffalo,
And drove the rebel pickets in
With shot and shout and clang and din!
We looked for bloody work before us,
And the deadly martial chorus
Of musketry and sabre clash—
Of cannon's roar and blinding flash.
That there were heroes made that day,
It scarce becomes the muse to say.
Some knew quite well they had no fear,
As all alone they lingered in the rear.
How many heroes fight unseen,
And waste their courage on the air;
Proclaim with proud and boastful
mien,
The surplus courage they could
spare,

And put to shame the Spartan race,
If they the enemy might face.
It boots not now that I should tell
The sequel, for you know it well.
It ended not as we had dreamed it,
And yet a very triumph seemed it,
A meager feast, yet fed we on it,
A battle fought and we had won it.

A year of quiet yet unrest,
By Gauley's stream or Sewell's crest
In rapt expectancy was spent,
Scarce knowing what by war was meant.
But Death, with breathings cold and
damp,
Had frequent access to our camp,
And lured two genial hearts away
To mingle in his dread array.
First Blessing passed to his domain,
Then Niday joined the sombre train;
Death nobler spirits never led
In all the armies of the dead.

On every wind, on every blast,
On every zephyr floating past,
On every fragrant matin breath,
Came whisperings of blight and death;
While war's fierce notes but louder grew,
They bade Truth's champions be true,
To shrink not from the battle's chance,
But firm with confidence advance.

Though life were sweet and friends were dear,
All, all must be forgotten here.

Cloyd Mountain's fastnesses defied,
Where Jenkins boasted in his pride,
While he arrayed his mighty host,
That should the battle there be lost,
He too should render up the ghost!
Ah, ne'er was more prophetic boast!
For ere that day's last beams were shed,
That field was strewn with rebel dead—
The rebel chief himself went down,
And mangled lay with fatal wound,
And, as the wind drives chaff away,
His marshalled host fled in dismay.

We well may say that until then,
We little knew our bravest men;
For not till 'mid the battle's roar,
From all that had been known before,
Could be discerned the brave and true,
Who laggards were, yet these were few.
And while the bugle's martial breath,
Still called the brave to deeds of death,
And while the musket's deadly crash
Was heightened by the cannon's flash,
We hurled us on the foeman's line
Where bristling sabres most did shine;
'Twas then that dying groans replied
To sabre stroke and heroes died;

Yet like an ocean's wave we pressed
The foe all vanquished and distressed.
Then brave men wept, for there has
been

Than victory one sadder scene.
Defeat, the bitterest of all.

Triumph leaves much of real gall,
For who may think on comrades gone
Beyond that stream whence none return,
And not feel swelling in his breast,
Sad throes that will not be repressed?
But when Defeat's deep mists are spread
Between the living and the dead,
What weapon shall we set apart,
That deeper wounds the soldier's heart?

There fell Clark, the brave and true,
The wise in counsel, strong to do,
Whose spirit would not leave its clay,
Until the death-strife passed away.

When gazing on the setting sun,
And feeling that his race was run,
His life-blood moistening the sod,
His soul just going back to God,
His lips still uttering the prayer,
That o'er his loved ones still that care
Would be, that notes the sparrow's fall,
And watches lovingly o'er all,
He asked, "how has the battle gone?"
"The day is ours," 'twas said by one:
Then o'er his face there came a smile

That faintly lingered there awhile;
“Thank God,” he said, “now let me die.”
His light went out, but shines on high!
And o'er that sun-browned soldier face
An angel presence whispered—Peace.
Death loves a shining mark, ’tis said,
To brighter, ne’er his arrow sped.

Now, when another day had passed,
The end we sought was gained at last.
The bridge that long had been the boast
Of Southern prowess now was lost;
And while the missiles thick and fast
Played on our ranks or whistled past,
'Twas Crossland's match that lit the
flame

That burned the rebel life in twain.
Then did the smoky column rise
Our sign of triumph to the skies;
Then did the flames to heaven aspire
And seemed the foeman's funeral pyre,
While on the river's placid stream
Float burning brands and wreathing
steam.

The shouts that seemed to rend the sky,
The rallying song, “The Battle Cry,”
We could not if we would forget,
We often seem to hear them yet;
And when the snows of age have spread
Their whitening folds upon our heads
In mind we'll wander to that scene

And seem to live it o'er again.
O'er mountain heights, through scenes
of blood
We pushed our way to Greenbrier's flood,
While murderous bands on every side
But sought to crimson more the tide
Of cruel war, while greed and gold
Were all they sought; for these they sold
Their manhood, conscience and their
life,
Nor recked they how should end the
strife.
And Mudwall's legions hovered near
On either flank, in front and rear,
Yet never seemed in willing plight
To stand a fair and open fight.

At length we heard with what success
Our Grant subdued the Wilderness;
How great the carnage that it cost,
How near it came of being lost,
And how without regard to time
He'd fight it out upon that line;
While Sherman's "Onward to the Sea"
Was heard, and smote the heart of Lee.

Again the rallying note was heard,
Our hearts with anxious bodings stirred;
Again the Allegheny's crest
Loomed up to view, was scaled and past;
With every inch contested still

By rebel hosts with stubborn will,
As Jackson river may attest,
But Panther Gap will serve the best.
At Staunton joined by Hunter's band,
With Hunter's self to take command,
Then southward still with cautious pace
We left behind a crimson trace,
With here and there a new made grave,
Where fought and fell the good and brave.
Ere long we paused at Lexington,
Long since revered by Washington,
Whose statue there still seemed to tell
Of all this land he loved so well,
While for its wrongs you seemed to trace
The lines of sorrow on his face.
How would it be had flesh and blood,
Not iron, clothed him where he stood,
With heart still beating in his frame
As warm as erst for Freedom's name !
How would his angry, righteous frown,
Smite Treason's brazen minions down !
Here Stonewall sleeps, and o'er his grave
The stars and bars did fitly wave;
For wrong he fought; for wrong he
died ;
He gloried in his wrong. His pride
Was in his treason and his shame
That still shall gather round his name;
And yet about his grave were strewn
Flowers of richest, rarest bloom;
Nature's poets made to weave

A false inscription o'er his grave.
Here Hunter's genius was displayed.
Defenseless homes in ashes laid,
Or wives and helpless childhood turned
Into the streets to see their houses
burned,
Might tell that tale of prowess well,
But better still one word may tell
Than any other ever heard ;—
It is the sequel : *Chambersburg !*

By sturdy foes confronted yet,
Whom still we conquered as we met ;
Encouraged thus from day to day,
We marched triumphant on our way
By that abyss that God has spanned
With rocky bent* with His own hand,
Whose grandeur does as much outvie
What man can do as earth and sky
Are held apart by starry space
Whose yonder bound no eye can trace ;
And by the James' clear rolling stream
Where through the mountain's rocky
seam,
Its waters murmur in their track,
While cavern echoes answer back ;
And over rugged mountain steeps,
Between the lofty Ottar Peaks
With Fancy Farms spread at their feet

* The Natural Bridge.

To make the lovely scene complete.
Now, if to fight were to proclaim,
How terrible were Hunter's name!
He'd conquer all beneath the sun,
However short the race he run.
Yet should the foe be at a distance,
The torch he'd bring to his assistance;
Brave to pursue when fled the foe,
But cautious lest too fast he'd go;
Whene'er too fresh might seem the track,
His caution bade him hasten back.
'Twas thus when Lynchburg near was
gained,
By our own prowess, too, attained,
When thrice the rebel legions fled
And left their maimed, and mangled dead,
Thrice reinforced, yet forced to yield,
And leave us victors of the field.
And, as 'twas muskets, dare and dash,
Unaided by the cannon's crash,
That won for us this great success,
Their admiration to express,
For us as highly favored ones,
They left us two large Rodman guns.
Yet, Turley fell amid the strife,
And Stroup, the elder, gave his life;
And others, would that I could name,
Whose deeds deserve the boon of fame.
While unsupported we fought there,
Full twenty thousand in the rear
Were guarding Hunter's grave dictation

Of still another proclamation !
That should the rebels still fall back,
He'd follow lively in their track.
But, hark ! he hears the cannon's roar,
Each moment louder than before.
"In faith," he said, "they stand their
ground,
For this is no uncertain sound.
So when the shades of night come on,
I'll bid my army to return.
And if I'm spared, some future day
I'll just proclaim a victory ;
But if I'm taken, wo to me !
They'll hang me to the nearest tree."
With Hunter frantic with affright,
His cursings hideous day and night,
No human tongue can fitly tell
The torments of that earthly hell !
Had Satan's self appeared to reign,
It were not more like his domain.
Through day and night, through night
and day,
We westward kept our weary way,
While every sound proclaimed retreat
And clogged the movements of our feet.
O, Hunger, Thirst, and Heat and Chill,
We know thy every pang and ill,
For we have suffered all that man,
Of e'en thy sorest torments, can.

In spite of Hunter's want of art,

In spite of rebels' cunning part,
That higher power brought us through,
That ever aids the just and true,—
That bids the rage of discord cease,
And whispers to the tumult—*Peace*.

But down the Shenandoah's side,
Came pouring fast the rebel tide—
Again the proud invaders stand
Upon the shores of Maryland.
Then loyal hearts were beating slow,
And fondest hopes seemed buried low,
While doubts and fears were ne'er more
rife,
The nation trembled for its life.

Insatiate Demon, War, oh, when
Wilt thou release thy hold on men ?
When wilt thou stay this crimson flood,
This stream of brothers' mingled blood ?
Dost not relent, when thou dost see,
The hearts made desolate by thee ?
And yet dost see on every hand
The sable woof that palls the land ?
“ Still Duty, let thy bidding be
The beacon star that guideth me ! ”
Each in his inmost soul thus said
And followed on as Duty led.
We met the foe at Carter Farm,
Where Crossley left his good right arm ;
And Wilson, Rockhold, Willard, Steece,

Made out to catch a ball apiece.
Do you remember how we stood
Before the rebels in the wood?
Our single line in open field
Confronted columns well concealed,
With rocks and trees their citadel,
Their work of blood projected well;
Then how a living wall we stood,
Each moment costing precious blood.
With "Forward" for our battle cry,
Resolved to conquer or to die,
We rushed upon their serried ranks,
And doubled in their lengthened flanks
With blows so savage, left and right,
They gladly sought escape in flight.
I think I used to hear them say,
One southern man would drive away
Five Yankees—mudsills, if you choose—
And still it always seemed strange news.
Pray, how stood our numbers then?
Twelve hundred to five thousand men!
Not always to the boastful, strong,
'Tis true, does victory belong.
To every brave that fell that day,
Would I a fitting tribute pay,
Did words obey the heart's behest,
To weave the measure it loves best.

Though chafed in many a battle's heat,
We never yet had known defeat;
Though pressed we never had to yield,

But masters were of every field ;
And so 'twere painful to reherse
How came at length our first reverse.
The Sabbath bells with joyful tone
Called Christians to their earthly home.
A brighter smile was never worn
By this green earth than on that morn ;
When curbless as the surging main
Came Early's hosts along the plain,
Nor with good grace we yet could yield
The vantage of the mooted field.

If with a word I do intrude,
'Tis to express my gratidue.
When left upon the battle field,
With not one ray of hope revealed,
Save that *best* hope that fondly clings
To other than terrestrial things ;
My life's blood ebbing sure and fast,
Each moment seeming as the last ;
When sleep came stealing o'er my frame,
From which I might not wake again—
And seemed before another sun
Should gild the earth, Death's work
 were done ;
'Twas then that Heaven gave me friends ;
Blest source on which all good depends !
As if allied by flesh and blood,
These pitying friends who 'round me
 stood—
With ministering were not content,

Till every hopeful means was spent—
And from Death's downward, beaten
track,
They lured my fainting spirit back.
Yet dear to others as to me,
Their deeds of love should ever be.
They loved their country and their God,
But *never* kissed rebellion's rod.
To those brave hearts how much we owe
Of gratitude we ne'er can know ;
They dared be loyal, though disgrace
Should ever stare them in the face.

Our laurels still were green and bright
As though we had not lost the fight—
Though torn in many rifts and shreds,
That ensign still waved o'er our heads,
And nerved each comrade to endure
The sting that only time could cure.
And then the brightness of the noon,
Gave way to sombre, dusky gloom.
The humid clouds came bounding forth
To moist the thirsty, parching earth ;
The winds indulged their wildest strain
And brought their icy breath again ;
And all night long in field and wood
There groped pursuing and pursued.
Our army all in fragments torn,
But not destroyed, howe'er cast down ;
And never did a band of men
Seem longing more for light again,

Which when it came brought little more
Than Death and Terror, as before.
All day, in hotly pressed retreat
And weariness we dragged our feet;
Hope lingered, and abiding trust,
That God would bless a cause so just.
Now on Potomac's northern side
We lingered and the foe defied;
And noting each design or chance
Prepared to make *one more* advance.
With rest, a new commander came,
What foe but trembles at his name?
Yes, Sheridan shall lead the van;
The rebel clan shall feel his ban,
And after Early, late and early,
Jubal Early, brisk and burly,
With eagerness our lines shall press,
To gain redress for our distress.
Our burnished steel once more he'll feel,
Nor shall we yield another field.
This resolution never slept.
I scarce need tell you how 'twas kept.
Let Halltown's pages first be read,
They tell of *forty maimed and dead!*
If further proof is needed still,
Make answer, slain of Berryville!

Again, along Opequan's stream,
The same contending hosts are seen;
Each formed in battle's stern array,
Awaits the signal for the 'fray;

While ever in the foremost van
Is seen the form of Sheridan;
And on his face that anxious smile
That spoke an earnest will the while;
While here and there in vale and grot,
Was heard anon the sullen shot,
The harbinger of that chill breath
That follows in the wake of death.
To calm Duval, the dauntless, brave,
'Tis said but one command he gave—
"To charge them to—," 'twas short
and terse,
To say how far sounds bad in verse.
One bugle blast wakes into life
The dormant energies of strife,
While Mars triumphant drives his ear—
Let loose are all the dogs of war.
The cannon's boom, the musket's roar
Apart are now discerned no more—
Death seldom dealt his blows so fast
Or after life more eager grasped;
And long in doubt it seemed that day
Which side should hold the victor's sway.
And Prestige plead with fond caress,
For either foe, the prize, success!
A sudden change comes o'er the scene.
Duval has crossed Opequan's stream,
Made crimson by devoted blood,
That dared be spilled upon its flood;
'Twas thus with zest the charge began,
That struck with fear the rebel clan;

That made them flee in fell distress,
And dire defeat with shame confess.
Ten miles of savage, running fight,
And hours as many brought to sight
Winchester's hills, where first defeat
Turned back our lines in sore retreat—
When night spread out her shadows deep
To let the rage of armies sleep,
While all along the loyal line
The camp fires had begun to shine.
Then did our chief this line indite—
“Down the valley we push to-night!”
A moment now to count the cost;
For all our gain, how much is lost?
Hall, Findley, Atkinson, went down,
And Stroup, with ghastly bleeding
wound;
One hundred more or bear a scar
Or sleep in peaceful rest from war.

A score of miles ere broke the morn,
Had Early dragged his legions lorn.
On Fisher's Hill his hosts should rest
And Safety guard him on its crest;
While thus his heart did proudly say:
“I hold the straight and narrow way,
My vengeance here will I dispense
From this my stronghold and defense.”
E'en while his heart with pride was
fraught,
A Crook-ed way his ruin wrought,

For Crook had sealed the mountain's side
That human footsteps had defied,
And broke the rebels' deep repose
That dreamed not of impending blows.
The annals of the war can tell
Scarce other feat performed so well.

October's sun had turned to gold
And crimson hue on every wold
The leaves that erst their verdant shade
Our roofless temples canopied,
And Night her rayless, sable pall,
With kind intent spread out o'er all ;
While densest vapors did enshroud
The slumb'ring camps as with a cloud ;—
'Twas then with stealthy step the foe
Disposed his lines to strike the blow
That did but seal his lost estate,
And made him writhe beneath his fate.
And when the morning's lines of red
Shot up the sky, with vengeance sped
The messengers of Death—so fast
Among our sleeping soldiers passed,
That many passed from sleep to rest,
With scarce an interval to test
The dread realities of death,
Or bid adieu the parting breath.
No wonder then that sore dismay
Among our ranks held potent sway ;
No wonder triumph crowned our foes,
And quickened thrice their deadly blows.

Though twice a league away or more,
Our chief has heard the battle's roar,
And bounding on his fretful steed,
He takes his way with headlong speed ;
While on his brow fierce anger burned
“The cowards knew my back was turned
But even now they'll rue the day
And hour of their temerity !”
Along the lines there wildly ran
Long, loud huzzas for Sheridan !
True, he was more unto us then,
Than were ten thousand armed men.
His presence warmed each soldier's heart
To dare and do a nobler part.
He formed anew the broken lines,
And spoke a cheering word betimes.
“Make this resolve,” he said, “as I,
That we will have our camp or die.
Where last you slept, to-night we'll sleep,
Or Death his vigils o'er us keep.”
Now firmly stood the trusted, tried,
And soon was staid the rebel tide,
Ay, put to such inglorious flight
As seldom greets a mortal's sight ;
Then victory was doubly sweet
From being born of such defeat.
But all our conflicts now were passed ;
As fitting seemed, this was our last ;
Our living ranks had thinner grown,
But glory marched where life had flown.

Sad duty yet remains:—to tell
How Coles at post of honor fell;
So young, so full of lively hope
When dashed was life's scarce tasted cup.
The time allotted to him here,
He gave not o'er to sloth or fear;
And from his heart full, free and warm
Gushed this resolve: well to perform
Whatever trust, however fraught
With pain. Nor selfish ease he sought.
And how, without a comrade near
To lend a loving, list'ning ear,
To catch a sigh or whispered tone
To bear it to his loved ones, home,
Caldwell in many a battle tried,
Still near the front in anguish died;
His faithful servant lingered yet,
And closed his eyelids moist and wet
With that bedewing humid breath
That hovers o'er the conch of death,—
Disposed his arms across his breast,
And left him to his final rest.

How frail and feeble is my verse,
Your deeds triumphant to rehearse.
In common with a million more
You share the honor placed in store—
A nation snatched from thralldom's
night,
Resplendent in full Freedom's light
That still with holier rays shall shine

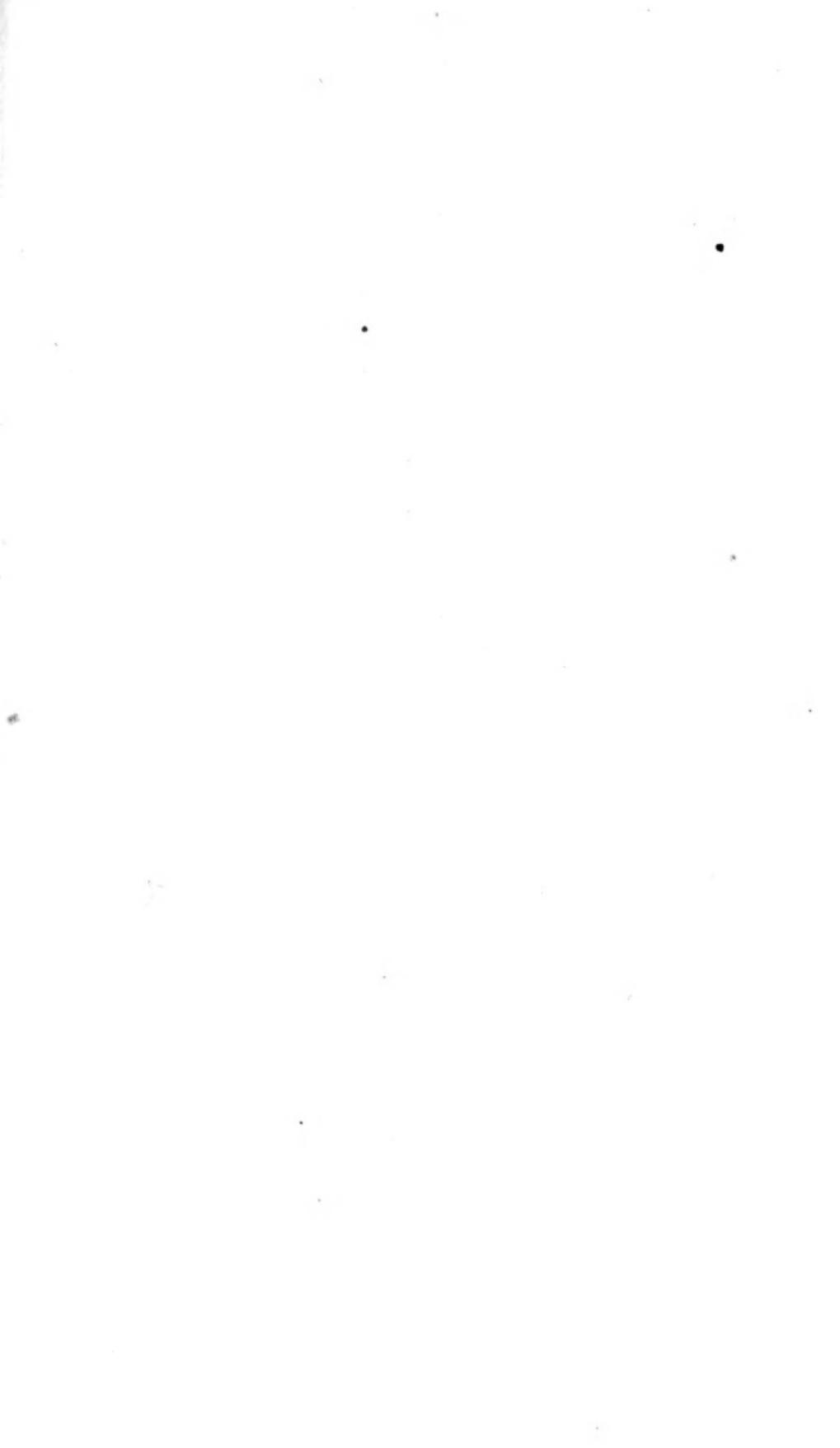
Reflected from a source divine.
God's purposes shall be fulfilled
In spite of all that man has willed.

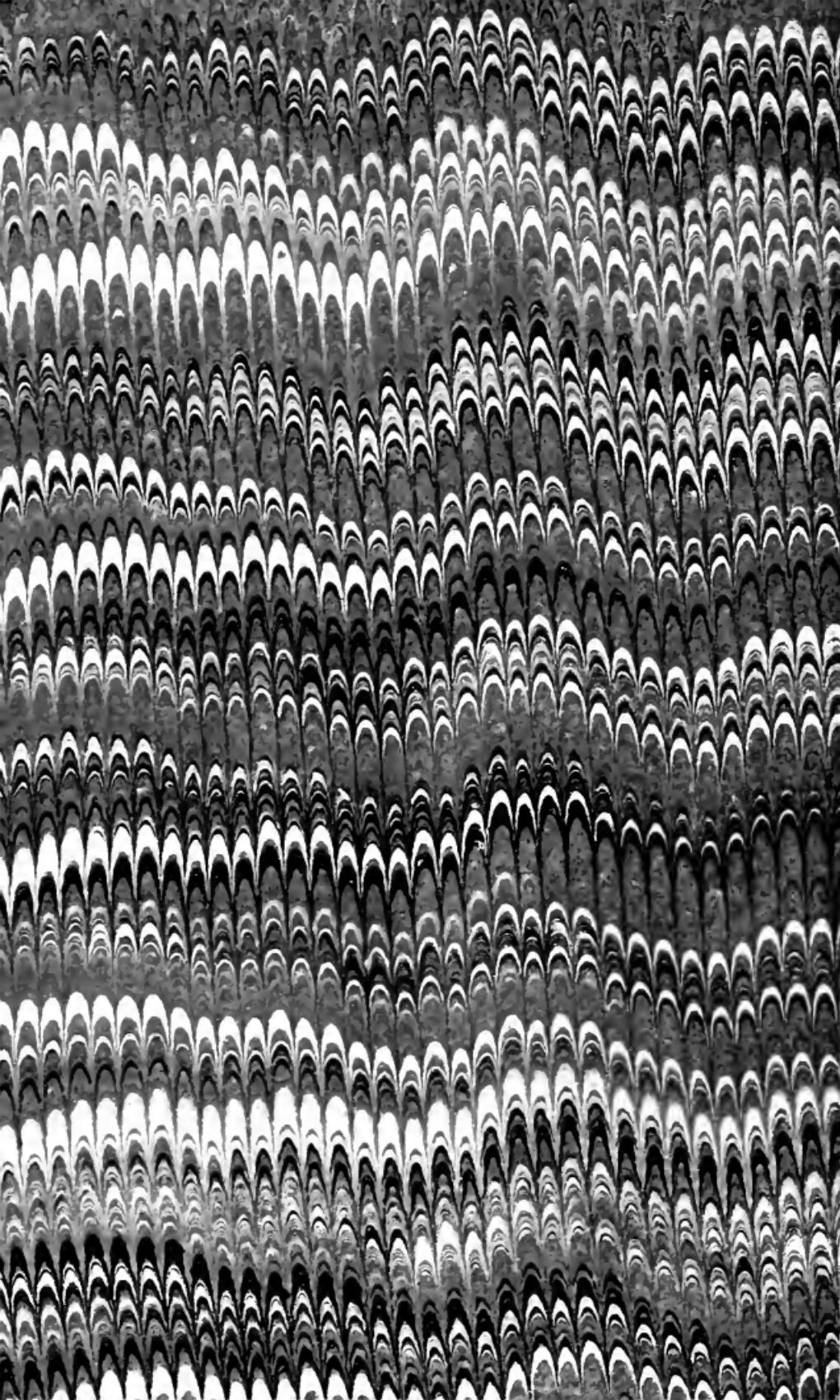
The Brook of Cedars softly creeps
By pebbly banks and rocky steeps,
While here and there along its way
Rest side by side the blue and gray;
And peaceful nature has effaced
The crimson track that war had traced,
Thrice spanned the wood with leafy
 roof,
Thrice spread abroad her verdant woof.
Those mounds, a fathom length, where
 fell
The comrade's tear in sad farewell,
The grassy sward has overspread,
In seeming kindness for the dead.
And if the dead might hover near,
Our thoughts to read or words to hear,
Within our inmost souls they'd find
Their name and worthy fame enshrined.

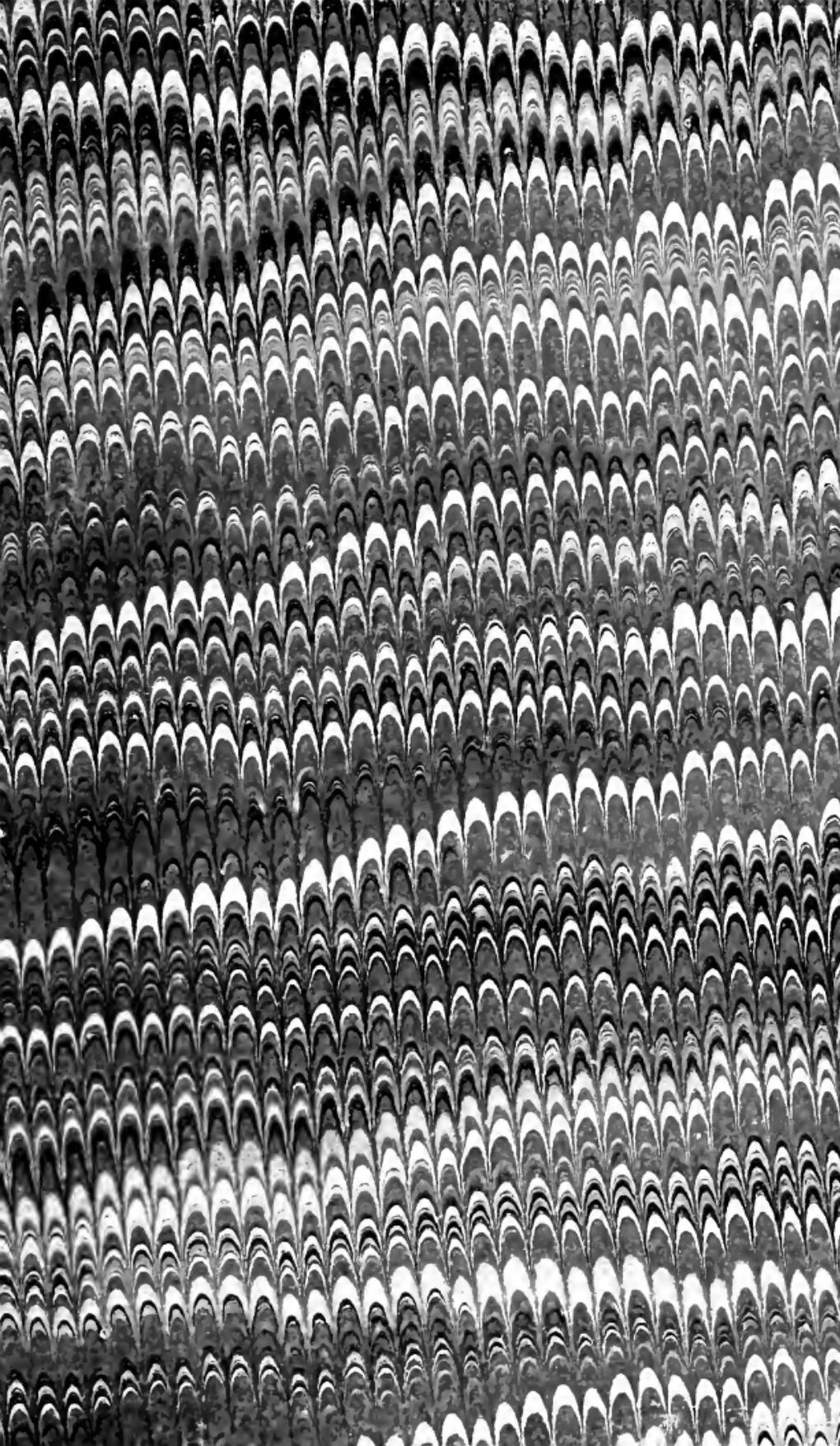
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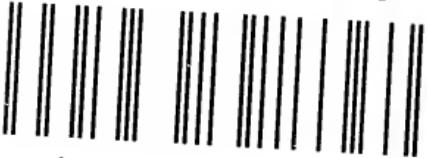








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